

THE POWER OF CLOTHING

— Making The World A Better Place —

The Future of Refugees Affects Us All



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Front cover photo by Masataka Nakano

The number of refugees has swollen alarmingly over the past decade, from nearly 40 million in 2006 to over 60 million* in 2016. People are fleeing their home country due to civil war, persecution or natural disaster often with only the clothes on their backs, or risking their lives crossing the sea in ill-equipped boats. The situation is the worst since World War Two.

Refugees want to live in safety. They want food, water, medical care, housing, clothing, access to education and work opportunities, and to live with their families – namely the basic necessities to sustain life and human dignity.

Current tools and frameworks are insufficient for addressing today's refugee problem. As globalization continues, refugee problems are starting to directly impact all of our futures. No matter where one lives in the world, it is not a distant issue.

As a clothing company, what can we, and our customers, do to help? UNIQLO is undergoing three different approaches to help relieve the refugee problem: Working together, delivering clothes, and our "know, learn, experience" program.

*The number of refugees as of June 2016



Khadiza Begum, born in the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ten years on, I want to help refugees fleeing to Bangladesh, as a UNIQLO employee

Khadiza's father, an ethnic Rohingya from Myanmar, fled to Bangladesh after taking part in political activities. Her mother followed with their three children. Khadiza, the 6th child, was born in Bangladesh. Khadiza was betrothed to a man who had fled to Japan for the same reasons and earned refugee status. She arrived in Japan on a cold New Year's Eve in 2006 with a dream.

Photo by Masataka Nakano



I am the sixth of 10 children. My three eldest siblings were born in my parents' homeland of Myanmar. My other siblings and I were born in Bangladesh after my parents fled there. My mother and father are Rohingya, an Islamic ethnic minority in Myanmar. My father studied to be a doctor at Yangon University in Myanmar's capital, but very few Rohingya become doctors. He couldn't get a job after graduation and struggled to get training. After holding a demonstration with his friends, my father had to leave Myanmar and fled alone to Bangladesh. My mother was pregnant with her fourth child at the time.

My mother is the daughter of a large landowner in a village where Rohingya were able to live in peace. However, after the military government came to power, severe restrictions were placed on Rohingya in terms of movement, education and work. My mother defied her parents and followed my father to Bangladesh, with only the clothes on her back and his letters for comfort. She was reunited with my father, but life was tough.

My father hid his ethnic background and acted like a native from Bangladesh to protect his children. He did well as a clinic doctor and moved to a large hospital five years later.

In time, my father began negotiating with the government to help improve conditions for those living in refugee camps. People listened to him

because of his standing as a doctor. But when the government changed, he lost his post. He took any work he could get to support his family and was hardly ever at home.

My father dreamt of returning to Myanmar one day and so he sought suitable husbands for his daughters among fellow Rohingya refugees worldwide.

Marriage over medical studies

My husband is a maternal relative born in Myanmar. For his intellectual involvements in politics, his father, a historian and writer, became unsafe. The family, including my husband, who was just 18 years-old, faced a similar consequence. He gave up his life as a Yangon University student and fled to Japan. His near-death experience is the stuff that films and books are made of. Two and a half years later he was finally granted refugee status in Japan.

I first met my husband when he came to Bangladesh for a visit after receiving refugee status. I was 18, he was 28. I was studying hard to become a doctor, but I knew it would cause my family problems if the authorities found out we were Rohingya, so I reluctantly gave up.

When I was introduced to my husband, I insisted that he let me continue my studies before I agreed to marry him.





I came to Japan on December 31, 2006. It was so cold it felt like a refrigerator. In April 2007, we moved into an apartment provided by the Refugee Headquarters (RHQ) and I began studying Japanese. I finished the six-month program ahead of time and passed Level 2 on the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

Despite my husband's promise to let me study, I didn't think that it would be possible on his salary. Still, he kept encouraging me to look for scholarships.

My RHQ teacher introduced me to a Japanese language school in Shinjuku so I could pass Level 1 and try to get into a university. I received a 70% discount on the fees and studied furiously for two years. Then I learned that Aoyama Gakuin University offered one scholarship per year as part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) refugee higher education program. I thought I had as much chance of getting it as winning the lottery, but miraculously I did!

Hearing about UNIQLO's refugee support at university

I wanted to study about refugees at university so I joined the School of Cultural and Creative Studies. I learned about UNIQLO's support program for refugees in my second year. As a housewife, I was already a big fan because I often shopped there.

I became pregnant at the end of my first year. My husband told me to continue studying hard while I was pregnant and that he would help look after the child once it was born. My son was born in the summer of my second year. My husband gave up his job and started selling second-hand cars and looking after our son so I could study. We were blessed with a second child at the end of my third year. With the help of my teachers and friends, I was able to raise two children and graduate after writing my dissertation on refugees in Japan.

I did a 10-day internship at the UNIQLO Ikebukuro East Exit Store when I was a student. I have such a loud voice that I fast became known for my energetic and enthusiastic greetings. Some

of my colleagues said they could hear me on the third floor!

The store manager and everyone were great, so I asked to work part time after the internship finished. The store manager didn't mind when I asked to wear a hijab because I was a follower of Islam. I was so grateful and decided then and there that I wanted to become a full-time UNIQLO employee one day and help other refugees.

Helping people regain independence, one at a time

I stopped working part time at the Ikebukuro East Exit Store when I had children, but the store manager encouraged me to come back when my children were older. My husband's halal food business struggled in the wake of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami so we moved to Tatebayashi in Gunma prefecture. I had graduated from university by then and had some Rohingya friends in Gunma. The store manager suggested I work at the Tatebayashi store, so I put the children in nursery and got started.

Most people imagine refugees as poor people living in unsanitary conditions, but some of them might have actually come from more affluent backgrounds. To save themselves, they had to give up everything and flee to another country. You just can't explain how that experience feels.

Rather than just accepting more refugees alone, I would like to see countries help foster their independence so refugees don't lose hope. People can move forward if they have education and employment opportunities, and that benefits the country as well.

My dream over the next five years is to work as a UNIQLO representative to help Rohingya in refugee camps in Bangladesh. When my children are a little older, I want to become a full-time UNIQLO employee. If that isn't possible, then I would like to do something myself to help refugees.

If we help one person regain their independence, then they can help the next person to do the same. To me and my husband, no amount of help is too small.



column

Refugees: Today and in the future

The problems of 60 million refugees and displaced persons are integral to our own future.

Photos: UNHCR (except P.8 bottom left)

Refugees are regular people who have crossed borders in search of a safe place to live after being forced from their homes and land due to civil war, human rights violations, ethnic or religious persecution. They had no choice but to become refugees.

Since the terror attacks in Paris and Belgium, Europe, which was previously comparatively tolerant towards refugees, has become more hesitant in accepting more refugees, inflicting an even greater burden on them.

Taking in a swelling number of refugees requires financial resources, personnel and housing stock. We need to reach a good level of mutual understanding to minimize inevitable frictions caused by differences in religion, culture and customs. The countries receiving refugees know the gravity of the situation but struggle to deal with it. The current situation is increasingly severe.

Seventeen years a refugee

The Syrian refugee problem has continued since 2011, placing a considerable burden on neighboring countries and Europe as well.

Many displaced persons have left their homes but stayed within their national borders, while an increasing numbers of refugees are fleeing to other countries. Several million refugees are already living in neighboring Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Lebanon, with a population of just over 4 million, is already housing 1 million refugees. Turkey accommodates 2.7 million refugees, the highest in the world.

Most refugees wish to return home once peace is reinstated, but it is hard to predict when that time might come. It is also difficult to move to a third country to pursue a new life, so many refugees are stuck in camps in neighboring countries.

A refugee is now expected to spend an average 17 years in camps or temporary housing. Young people born in refugee camps without education or employment are rapidly losing the ability to develop an independent future. It is hard to have hope without current, or future, prospects.

Nurturing people, developing regions

The countries accepting refugees are not affluent

themselves. While, most areas are underdeveloped, local communities are expected to provide education and medical treatment for refugees.

We need to build infrastructure such as roads, electricity and water supply, as well as schools, hospitals and work places. We need to support economic independence by offering children a path to completing high-school education, and technically trained people the opportunity to work. We need to help transform refugee camps from desolate places where time stands still, into sources of future growth for both refugees and local communities.

With refugees expected to remain an average 17 years, the UNHCR, along with individual governments, refugee support groups, private companies and educational institutions is starting to offer a new type of support, which is designed to help preserve human dignity, create more promising education and employment prospects and develop a stable regional economy.

What we can do as a clothing company

We have collected 10 million items of clothing through our global "Ten Million Ways to HELP" project. This has been driven by our All-Product Recycling Initiative which has delivered much-needed clothing to refugees, and boosted awareness of refugee issues.

UNIQLO began supporting refugees and displaced persons, victims of natural disasters, and pregnant or nursing mothers around the world in 2006, through its global partnership with the UNHCR, and in conjunction with other NGOs.

Clothes offer vital protection against cold, heat and infections, but they also preserve people's dignity and safety. Often children miss out on going to school, or people refrain from getting involved in new communities simply because they don't have any decent clothes to wear.

We all know how the design, colour and fit of clothes can help us feel brighter and more confident. It's exactly the same for refugees. It is amazing how a simple piece of clothing can spark a genuine smile.

The Ten Million Ways to HELP project

UNIQLO started its Ten Million Ways to HELP project in October 2015 to help increasing numbers of refugees by delivering UNIQLO clothing aid around the world.

We reached the 10 million target swiftly, thanks not only to the recycled items that individual customers brought into our stores, but also to active collection drives by participating companies, schools and other organizations.

We want people to understand what they are recycling their clothes for. It is up to us to explain what life is like for refugees living in camps and how clothes impact a refugee's life to boost awareness of refugee issues and inspire people to make a

difference.

The quickest and most effective way to encourage clothing recycling is to encourage people to learn about refugee problems. We launched the Power of Clothing Project in 2013 to help to broaden awareness among primary, middle and high school students of the refugee problem and the role of clothes, and to promote the collection of clothing for children in need. UNIQLO employees visit participating schools to give presentations and students conduct a clothing drive on their own.

Educational institutions and a variety of other groups actively promoted the collection of clothing for our Ten Million Ways to HELP project. Many people have expressed an interest in knowing more about refugee issues, suggesting a growing realization of the seriousness of the problem and a strong desire to do something about it.

When those involved in the collection drives go home and tell their families, it sparks a broader debate on refugee issues.

We feel the impact of our Power of Clothing project is now expanding beyond educational institutions to the broader community.

Scout Association activities

One particular organization that participated in our Ten Million Ways to HELP project was the Scout Association of Japan. UNIQLO donated original polo shirts for the World Scout Jamboree, attended by 34,000 people from 155 countries and regions,

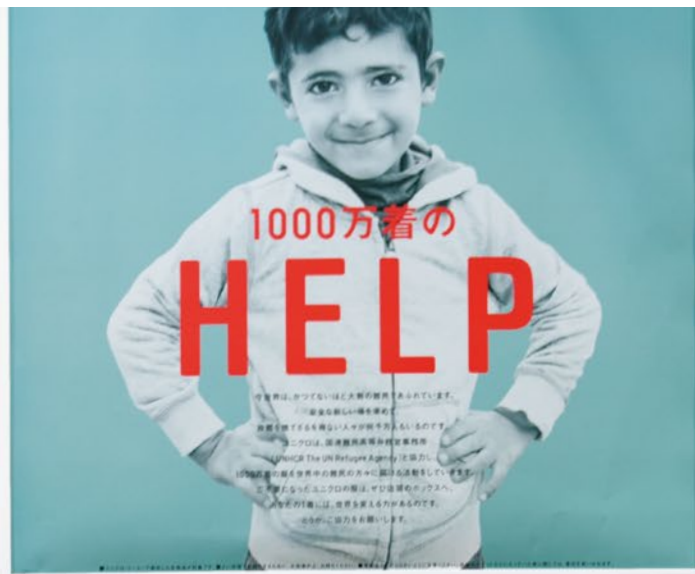


Photographer: Masataka Nakano



Photographer: Shinsuke Kamioka

Launched in October 2015, the Ten Million Ways to HELP project is very much a global initiative. Many people who fled from the Middle East are now living in Germany, so UNIQLO joined forces with local NGOs to donate clothing to refugees in Berlin. In January 2016, they visited six refugee camps to deliver 50,000 items of warm clothing to 10,000 people to help them through the cold winter (top left). In Japan, students at Waseda and other universities collected clothes for us (top right). Professional golfer Adam Scott and our other global ambassadors have also helped drive the campaign forward (middle right). Soon after reaching the 10 million target in May, we delivered 180,000 items to 540,000 refugees in camps in Rwanda.



and later the Association's leaders got together and offered to help with our project.

Scout Association activities are aimed at creating a better society, by fostering respect for life, a willingness to discuss and cooperate with others, and a desire to perform public service. For instance, scouts will collect donations from the public in the event of a major natural disaster in Japan.

Scout leaders decided that the Ten Million Ways to Help project was a natural extension of their current activities and so they promoted the project on the Scout Association of Japan website and encouraged members to get involved.

Giving your clothes to refugee children

In scouts, 6-7 year olds are called Beavers and 8-11 year olds are called Cubs. These children are not necessarily old enough to fully understand world events or the refugee crisis, but both of these age groups worked very hard for the project.

Children's clothes in refugee camps are always in short supply, so the scouts decided they should first collect kid's clothes. The children often struggled to understand what it means to be a refugee but, by collecting their clothes and delivering them to UNIQLO stores, they understood that those clothes would be handed out and worn by children in need. The scout leaders decided it is never too early to learn about refugees and that this was a good way to build awareness.

We accepted all brands of clothing for the

scout collection drive because we thought the most important thing was for the children to understand the difference they could make by donating their own clothes.

From the child to the parent

The scouts' collection drive generated another benefit by bringing the recycling project to the attention of many of the children's parents and caregivers. When the children went home and talked about their activities, many families began talking about refugees issues for the first time. These are all small steps, but they are significant in terms of spreading awareness.

As the collections progressed both the children and their caregivers became increasingly enthusiastic. When parents posted photos of the activities on Facebook, they were amazed at the number of likes those posts received. The posts were shared with "refugee" as the keyword, encouraging more sympathetic responses.

The article that the Association published on its website to mark the end of the collection drive received ten times as many views as usual.

The children learned about the challenges refugee face and they experienced a collection drive. All of that, and the subsequent promotion of the drive, has helped expand the circle of activity even further.

We may have reached our 10 million target, but the All-Product Recycling Initiative will continue as long as there are refugees in need of clothing.



"I loved my clothes but I've outgrown them. If I had a chance to meet a refugee, I would like to teach them Japanese and learn their language."



"I donated ten-year's worth of clothes full of memories. I am happy to know they would be useful to refugees who didn't have enough clothes."



"I heard some children were separated from their families. I hope they can come back to their country someday. We collected kid's clothing, but they probably need adults clothing too."



Refugee problems are our problems.

Today, there are over 60 million refugees and displaced persons around the world who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution. This is an unprecedented and urgent global problem of mammoth proportions.

Many refugees have lost their family, their homes and their livelihood. Student refugees can't continue their studies. Some refugees are psychologically and physically scarred, or struggling with illnesses. Young children can't understand what is going on around them, or imagine a better future.

Fast Retailing, aims to use its clothing business to change clothes, change conventional wisdom and change the world. We believe that understanding refugee issues and offering practical support is the role, and the responsibility, of a global company.

In response to the deteriorating refugee situation, we expanded our All-Product Recycling Initiative by launching a "Ten Million Ways to HELP" project in October 2015, collecting recycled UNIQLO and GU brand clothing at stores across 16 countries and regions where we operate. Fast Retailing's entire global staff helped collect clothing, but we were also joined by private companies, educational institutions and other organizations. Having surpassed the 10 million target in May 2016, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone involved.

Today, many refugees find themselves in oppressive situations that jeopardize their right to live. Refugees who have lost the will to live need our support. This is not a distant problem. As globalization progresses, refugees are, to all intents and purposes, our neighbors. We need to join forces with people from other regions to supply collective knowledge and support. The refugee problem is, without a doubt, OUR problem.

Working with our customers and various partners we hope to help create a world without refugees.



Continuing to make a difference

We will continue our All-Product Recycling Initiative as long as people need clothing aid, so please bring your gently used UNIQLO items to our stores. Thank you!



- We accept clothes at any time during opening hours.
- Please place items in the recycling box or give them directly to our staff.
- Any UNIQLO item will be gratefully received.
- Please donate clean items to ensure they are delivered in good condition.
- We cannot take responsibility for anything left in pockets.

Thanks to your help, we have collected 10 million items to donate to refugees and displaced persons worldwide. We promise we will put your donations to good use. Please continue to bring used UNIQLO clothes into the store. We greatly appreciate your support!



uniqlo.com/en/csr



10 MILLION THANKS

Thanks so much for the 10 million items donated to date.

Grandmother with grandson
Kyrgyzstan

www.uniqlo.com/en/csr
www.unhcr.org